



This artist has class

By Literacy Trainer Jay Yeo, Computer Assisted Literacy in Libraries, yeoj@lvccld.org, 702/507-3430

On March 12, Otoniel (“Otto”) Casasola completed the intermediate-level English as a Second Language (ESL) course at the Clark County Library. During the celebration of this achievement, Otto and his fellow students received their certificates and enjoyed an international pot-luck dinner while ethnic music sounded in the background. The students were bidding good-byes to their new-found friends, exchanging e-mail addresses and practicing their newly acquired skills in conversational English. What made this occasion particularly special was a gift to our program from Otto: his rendition, on canvas, of our ESL classroom. The intention of this gift was a tip of the hat and a “thank you” to the CALL Program and especially to ESL Instructor Henry Marshall, whose ability to build an effective learning community in the classroom made all the difference for these students.



Otto, who works for a swimming pool maintenance and repair firm, discovered art when he was a young boy growing up in Guatemala. He has continued to draw and paint throughout most of his life and particularly likes to paint murals. Examples of these can be seen at Rosati's Pizza in Summerlin and Costa del Sol Salvadoran Restaurant on S. Nellis Blvd.

Otto painted himself and Instructor Henry Marshall in this picture, along with several of his classmates. Otto is the student sitting in the front of the classroom facing the whiteboard. When I asked him where he was in the painting, he said, “Oh, that’s me in the front of the classroom; the only one paying attention, ha, ha!”

For more information, contact the Computer Assisted Literacy in Libraries (CALL) Program at the Clark County Library, 1401 E. Flamingo Road, Las Vegas, 702/507-3446, <http://lvccld.org/cardsservices/call.cfm>.

You make a living by what you get, but you make a life by what you give. —Winston Churchill

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ELL-U (www.ell-u.org), a U.S. Department of Education initiative, provides adult English language teachers with 24/7 access to free, high-quality professional development activities, evidence-based resources, and a community of fellow practitioners and experts in the field. By providing free professional development and training through a collaborative online community, ELL-U hopes to transform the

way ESOL instruction is delivered.

The content and learning for all ELL-U offerings are grounded in five critical learning priorities:

- principles of second language acquisition
- teaching adult English language learners (ELLs) who are emergent readers
- assessment in adult ELL programs
- principles of second language teaching: planning, implementing, and managing instruction
- the role of culture in teaching adult ELLs.

ELL-U offers aligned and scaffolded professional development opportunities supported by follow-up activities and collaborative online spaces to allow teachers to dive deeply into areas of interest.

- ✓ Online courses, study circles, and training events are designed primarily to increase content knowledge on a specific topic. They vary in intensity and duration, are offered through a variety of media including face-to-face and online settings, and are delivered both synchronously and asynchronously. All use evidence-based instruction and allow for individual exploration, individual or small group reflection, and/or large group discussions.
- ✓ The “campus library” contains vetted resources and course materials including training plans for study circles and most training event activities. The downloadable training plans could be used to develop local training events.
- ✓ Clubs and forums are online discussion spaces for interacting with peers nationwide. Forums are often faculty-led and related to online course topics. Clubs are focused on specific topics — for example, vocabulary instruction, working with emergent readers, etc. — and provide multiple ways to interact and share ideas and resources with others. Club members can create a learner web profile, which is then used to suggest resource selections based on individual experience and needs. The Community Bulletin Board allows users to pose questions to the entire community.

There is a brief ELL-U Orientation Tutorial (an online course) explaining ELL-U features and how to access them. A course catalog and user manual can be downloaded from the home page.

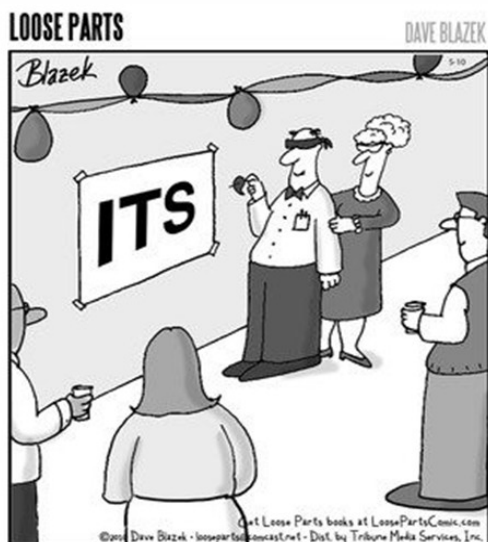
Free English study site



Immigrants and other adults who want to learn or improve their English skills may log on to the free online English portal at www.USALearns.org. The site targets adults with limited or no English language skills who are not inclined to attend traditional classroom programs or use fee-based resources — ideal for adults with limited means or those who cannot attend classes because of difficulty with schedules, transportation, or other barriers.

With clear audio cues, the site is designed for independent use. Teachers and tutors may also find instructional materials that can be used in classroom and individual instructional settings. The website has an online management system available for instructors' use.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education, through its Division of Adult Education and Literacy, oversaw the design of USALearns.



The games get pretty crazy at English teachers' parties.

Certificates: gateway to employment, higher ed

Nevadans get certified

The National Work Readiness Credential (NWRC) is a nationally recognized, portable certification of workforce readiness. It assesses an individual in workplace reading, workplace math, active listening, and situational judgment.

Several adult education programs have piloted classes leading to the NWRC, with good results and helpful lessons learned. For example:

- JOIN, Inc. in Carson City (www.join.org): The four clients who persisted in JOIN's self-paced study pilot program all received the Credential within two months, and with an average score of 94 (out of 100)! Student Xan Beckner reflected, "Having worked in the private sector, I was unprepared for the testing required for state jobs. Participating in the NWRC training through JOIN helped prepare me for gaining my new job with the state of Nevada."
- The Las Vegas Library's CALL program (<http://lvccld.org/cardservices/call.cfm>) piloted a 111-hour class for 16 students. The group included native English speakers and ELL students, as well. Five earned the Credential immediately following the class, seven are scheduled to re-test, and the remaining four are continuing to study. "The diversity of our students and our teaching staff contributed to the students' successful performance and their overwhelming satisfaction with the program," said NWRC Program Coordinator Mary Ramirez. "At the students' suggestions, we are adding additional workshops for those students who have not yet taken all four tests."
- Community Multicultural Center (www.cmclv.org) enrolled 12 people in its first class, which lasted 75 hours. According to Workforce Development Coordinator Holly Meyers, not all students were interested in taking the NWRC exam, but they did want that class, which is set up as though the students were new hires, attending on-the-job training. They sign a contract, are given an "Employee Handbook," and are expected to practice excellent work habits. "The exam and texts are at a seventh grade level and can be challenging to low-advanced ESL students," said Holly. "Six students earned the Credential, all with very high scores."

Several Nevada programs are offering the alternative National Career Readiness Certificate. See June/July 2012 issue (<http://nvae.us/6f>) for additional information on certifying students for the workplace.

Certification matters!

Certificates have superseded associate and master's degrees as the second most common award in the American postsecondary education and career training system, growing from six percent in 1980 to 22 percent of awards today. The June 2012 study "[Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees](#)" examined Certificates awarded by public two-year colleges (52 percent); private for-profit technical, vocational, business, and trade schools (44 percent); and private nonprofit schools (4 percent). The report details who earns certificates, the earning returns of varying certificates, where students earn them, and more. Highlights from the report:

- On average, certificate holders earn 20 percent more than high school graduates without any postsecondary education.
- Much of the value of a certificate is tied to working in-field, as do 44 percent of holders. Certificate holders who work in-field earn 37 percent more than those who work out-of-field.
- Some certificate holders earn as much as or even more than workers with college degrees. On average, a certificate holder who works in-field earns nearly as much as the median earnings of the holder of an associate degree.
- Certificates can serve as a stepping stone to further education and training or as a supplement to a college degree. Today, 34 percent of

Continued on page 4

This professional development project is a leadership activity funded by a grant from the Nevada State Department of Education, Workforce Investment Act, Title II (Adult Education and Family Literacy). There is no discrimination or denial of participation on the basis of race, color, sex, age, religion or religious creed, national origin, sexual orientation, ancestry, or disability.

Certification *(Continued from page 3)*

certificate holders also have a college degree. Of these workers, 62 percent earned their certificates first.

- The lifelong value of certificates is evident in the age distribution of certificate earners. While 66 percent of certificate holders earn their certificates before age 30, 18 percent are in their 30s, and 16 percent are 40 or older.
- Certificates awarded by program length (2010 data)
 - Short-term (less than one year of instructional time): 54%
 - Medium-term (one-two years of instructional time): 41%
 - Long-term (two-four years of instructional time): 5%
- Program length is not the best variable to evaluate earnings differences among certificates. Economic returns vary according to the certificate holder's field of study, gender, race, and ethnicity.
- The extent to which institutions can promote in-field work via, for example, job placement programs, significantly affects their graduates' success in becoming gainfully employed.

Read the full report at <http://nvae.us/86>, executive summary at <http://nvae.us/89>.

Teacher tips

The article "Building Employability Skills" in the March/April 2013 issue of TEXAS Adult & Family Literacy Quarterly (<http://nvae.us/8e>) lists six activities that work well in the ESL classroom, especially with students at the lower levels.

Who makes the \$\$\$?

Average annual income (2009 data):

High School dropouts	\$19,540
High School Diploma	\$27,380
Associate degree	\$36,190
Bachelors degree	\$46,930

—Source: U.S. Dept of Education, 2011

Median family-sustaining threshold:
\$35,000

What skills are needed?

According to a December 2012 survey of employers who hired recent college graduates conducted by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and American Public Media's *Marketplace*, "When it comes to the skills most needed by employers, job candidates are lacking most in written and oral communication skills, adaptability and managing multiple priorities, and making decisions and problem solving." See <http://nvae.us/8f>.